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The du-Row in a College German Class.

By Prof. John A. Hess, Indiana University, Bloomington, Ind.

Any one who has ever heard college graduates speak German has been impressed with their imperfect command of the familiar forms of address. As long as they used the pronoun *Sie*, the conversation moved along quite smoothly, but, as soon as they tried to speak to children using *du* and *ihr*, pronouns, possessives and verb-forms became hopelessly tangled. The reason for this state of things is not hard to discover. The students began the study of German as adults, were addressed with *Sie* by the teacher, and they in turn addressed the teacher with the conventional form. They have had practically no drill in the familiar forms.

In the high school this evil is not present to the same extent. The young pupils are addressed with their Christian names and, of course, with the pronoun *du*. The older pupils, who already consider themselves finished ladies and gentlemen, and the teacher are naturally addressed with *Sie*, and accordingly practice is afforded in both forms of address.

But how is this defect to be remedied in the case of college students? I have heard of college professors who call all the members of a German class simply by their surnames without the title *Herr* or *Fräulein* and then use the *du* and *ihr* just as in German secondary schools up to *Untersekunda*; e. g.: "Schmidt, hast du den Satz richtig geschrieben?" There would, however, seem to be certain serious objections to such a mode of procedure.

In the first place, there is not sufficient drill in the conventional forms of address, for by this practice the *Sie* form is limited to the times when the students address their teacher in the German tongue, and every

one knows that the teacher addresses the pupils ten times as often as he is addressed by them in the foreign tongue. Thus the remedy would be worse than the defect, for if it is not possible for college students to know more than one form of address, it should undoubtedly be the conventional form.

In the second place, those of mature years and of a sensitive disposition are offended by such a procedure. They do not enjoy having their family names hurled about with not a sign of a title, nor do they appreciate being *geduzt*.

In my own classes I have therefore tried another plan. After the first few days of preliminary drill on the alphabet and pronunciation, the German practice in the employment of *du*, *ihr* and *Sie* are explained at some length. At the end of the hour, volunteers are called for, who will consent to being called by their Christian name and being addressed with *du*, when German is spoken in class. Usually quite a number from both sexes respond. From these I select about six whom I consider the brightest and youngest and, at the beginning of the next recitation, request this select group to take seats in the front row and join the family circle. They are made to feel that it is a privilege to sit there, and, if some prove unworthy, they lose the honor and others are substituted in their place.

The advantages of such a system are evident. I have both a *du* — *ihr* group and a *Sie* group. I can drill each group separately and can also play each group against the other. Members of the *du* group can be required to address others within their own group or students of the *Sie* group. When members of the *Sie* group address those in the *du* group, they assume my prerogatives, calling them by their Christian name and using the intimate form of address. There is no chance for offense, for the six have entered into the agreement willingly and knowingly. (When English is spoken the special arrangement is naturally dropped and the usual dignity is maintained.) Moreover, the six realize their special privileges and responsibilities, a closer bond of sympathy exists between them and the teacher than in the case of the other members of the class, and the teacher knows that he can rely upon them to take the initiative in any new drill or exercise. As a result the tone of the whole class is greatly improved.

The special value of such groups in learning certain phases of German grammar I propose to show in the remainder of this article.

They can be employed to good advantage right at the outset in learning the conjugation of *sein* and *haben*. The following will illustrate the mode of procedure:

Teacher. *Ich bin der Lehrer. Karl, bist du der Lehrer?*

Karl. *Nein, ich bin nicht der Lehrer.*

Teacher. Richtig! Du bist nicht der Lehrer. Du bist ein Schüler.
Was bist du, Karl?

Karl. Ich bin ein Schüler.

Teacher. Ralph, was bist du?

Ralph. Ich bin ein Schüler.

Teacher. Ja, Ralph, du bist *auch* ein Schüler.

Teacher. Herr Jones, *ist* Ralph ein Lehrer oder ein Schüler?

Mr. Jones. Ralph *ist* ein Schüler.

Teacher. Jawohl, *er* ist ein Schüler, und was ist Karl?

Mr. Jones. Er ist auch ein Schüler.

Teacher. Marie, bist du auch ein Schüler?

Marie. Ja, ich bin ein Schüler.

Teacher. N-e-i-n, du bist kein Schüler. Du bist eine Schülerin.
(Explanation in English of the force of the suffix *-in*.) Marie, was bist du?

Marie. Ich bin eine Schülerin.

Teacher. Ist Eva auch eine Schülerin? Jawohl, *sie* ist auch eine Schülerin. Fritz, bist du eine Schülerin?

Fritz. Nein, ich bin keine Schülerin, ich bin ein Schüler.

Teacher. Fräulein Smith, ist Professor Rosental ein Schüler?

Miss Smith. Nein, er ist ein Lehrer.

Teacher. Richtig! Er ist ein Lehrer und ich bin ein Lehrer. *Wir sind* beide Lehrer. Karl und Ralph, *seid ihr* Lehrer?

Karl and Ralph. Nein, *wir sind* Schüler.

Teacher. Marie und Eva, was seid ihr?

Marie and Eva. Wir sind Schülerinnen.

Teacher. Herr Jones, was *sind Sie*?

Mr. Jones. Ich bin ein Schüler.

Teacher. Klasse, was *sind Sie*?

Class. Wir sind Schüler.

Teacher. Herr Miller, da sind Fritz, Karl und Ralph. Was *sind sie*?

Mr. Miller. *Sie sind* Schüler.

For the sake of the drill the pupils are allowed to ask each other questions in some such form as this: Ich bin ein Schüler (eine Schülerin) und was bist du (seid ihr, sind Sie)?

Similar drills are easily devised for *haben*.

Perhaps one of the greatest advantages of such a group system manifests itself when the possessive adjectives are being learned. Ordinarily, college students seem to have no ready appreciation of the differences in function of *dein*, *euer* and *Ihr*, and *unser* and *euer* also are continually confused. Such sentences as „*Wo haben Sie dein Buch gekauft?*“ and „*Wir lieben euere (our) Eltern*“ are not at all uncommon. The following

drill always serves to make their *Sprachgefühl* more reliable in such matters.

Teacher. Ich habe *mein* Buch. Fritz, wessen Buch hast du?

Fritz. Ich habe mein Buch.

Teacher. Richtig! Du hast *dein* Buch. Ralph, sage dem Fritz, wessen Buch er hat.

Ralph. Fritz, du hast *dein* Buch.

Teacher. Ralph, sage mir, wessen Buch Fritz hat.

Ralph. Er hat *sein* Buch.

Teacher. Ralph und Fritz, wessen Bücher habt ihr?

Ralph und Fritz. Wir haben *unsere* Bücher.

Teacher. Richtig! Ihr habt *euere* Bücher. Herr Jones, sagen Sie Ralph und Fritz, wessen Bücher sie haben.

Mr. Jones. Ralph und Fritz, ihr habt *euere* Bücher.

Teacher. Natürlich haben Ralph und Fritz *ihre* Bücher, und wessen Bücher haben Sie, Herr Jones?

Mr. Jones. Ich habe *meine* Bücher.

Teacher. Richtig! Sie haben *Ihre* Bücher.

The same drill with the girls of the class will bring out the use of *ihr* meaning *her*.

The *Sie* and *du* groups are also very serviceable in learning the conjugation of verbs. Especially is this true as regards the imperative forms. The class gets daily drill in these imperative forms, whenever the different members of the class are called on to recite; e. g.

Fritz, *lies* den ersten Satz.

Meine Freunde, *lest* den zweiten Satz.

Herr Miller, *lesen Sie* den nächsten Satz.

Meine Damen und Herren, *lesen Sie* den letzten Satz, etc.

Aside from this, special drills are devised. Let us assume that we are making a special study of the verb *geben*. The following conversation occurs:

Teacher. Fritz, *gib* mir dein Buch und sage, was du tust.

Fritz. Ich gebe Ihnen mein Buch.

Teacher. Ralph, bitte Karl, mir sein Buch zu geben.

Ralph. Karl, gib dem Lehrer dein Buch.

Teacher. Fräulein Meyer, bitte, *geben Sie* mir Ihr Buch. (She does this, telling what she does). Ralph, Fritz und Karl, *gebt* mir euere Bücher.

Ralph, Fritz and Karl. Wir geben Ihnen unsere Bücher.

Teacher. Bittet mich um euere Bücher.

Ralph, Fritz and Karl. Bitte, *geben Sie* uns unsere Bücher.

The groups can be used to equally good advantage in drilling upon the reflexive verbs and the verbs with separable prefixes. Take, for instance, the verbs *aufstehen* and *sich setzen*. Commands are given by the teacher and the pupil, or pupils, are required to state each time what they do. To start the exercise, the teacher says the following, suiting the action to the word:

Ich stehe auf. Ich stehe.

Ich setze mich. Ich sitze.

Teacher. Karl steh auf.

Karl. Ich stehe auf. Ich stehe.

Teacher. Setze dich.

Karl. Ich setze mich. Ich sitze.

Teacher. Meine Freunde, steht auf.

Du-row. Wir stehen auf. Wir stehen.

Thus the exercise proceeds. Individuals of the two groups and the groups themselves are required to respond. Later different members of the class are allowed to put others through the paces and thus they get drill in the imperative and the reflexive at the same time. In the winter time, when gloves are in evidence, the following sentence can be employed to good advantage: *Ich ziehe mir den Handschuh an.*

In the foregoing I have given my reasons for the formation of a family circle or *du* group within a college elementary German class and have outlined some of the special uses to which it may be put. The resourceful teacher will readily discover others.

To some, such an arrangement may seem rather infantile and ill adapted to college students. I am free to admit, that several years ago I should have thought so myself. At that time my ideal for the college class-room was dignity itself. However, my experience and experiments have gradually overcome this prejudice. As far as learning the elements of a language is concerned, I find that college students are only children of a larger growth and welcome all legitimate helps without feeling at all humiliated or chagrined, so long as these helps bring results and the teacher acts as though such devices were wholly normal and natural. Gradually pictures, charts, clock-dials, etc. have become a part of my necessary apparatus. My latest innovation is the organization of a *du* group, which makes possible and desirable the employment of many Gouin drills. The results have been very gratifying. The artificial barriers of the class-room, which formerly obtained, have been swept aside and we constitute as it were one large family. The students manifest greater enthusiasm for the work, their *Sprachgefühl* is becoming much more reliable, and I find the necessity for long formal explanations of grammatical topics largely obviated.